United Nations E/CN.3/2012/32

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 December 2011

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-third session
28 February-2 March 2012
Item 4 (m) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: World Statistics Day

World Statistics Day

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. At its forty-first session, the Statistical Commission, in its decision 41/109, had endorsed 20 October 2010 as the date for the first World Statistics Day, as well as the general theme of "Celebrating the many achievements of official statistics" and the core values of service, integrity and professionalism, while recognizing that each country might develop its own national theme, taking into account national priorities and circumstances (see E/2010/24, chap. I.B).

2. Following the celebration of the first World Statistics Day on 20 October 2010, the Commission, at its forty-second session, in its decision 42/101, expressed satisfaction and appreciation that the observance of World Statistics Day had been a global success and had made a positive impact in advocating the importance of official statistics. Moreover, the Commission commended the Statistics Division of the United Nations for providing useful tools and supporting the celebrations worldwide. It took note of the recommendation to allocate adequate time for preparation of the celebrations at the national and global levels and observed that, while the celebrations for the observance of World Statistics Day in 2010 had reached a wide audience, more attention should be given in the future to maximizing coverage in the media. The Commission also encouraged continuation of the observance of regional and national statistics days, which had proved to have a positive impact in promoting the role of statistics (see E/2011/24, chap. I.B).

3. In the context of the discussion about possible future World Statistics Days, the Commission took note of the proposals to observe World Statistics Day regularly, with a strong preference for either a two- or a five-year interval between observances, and requested the Statistics Division to formulate, in consultation with

* E/CN.3/2012/1.

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the Bureau of the Statistical Commission, a proposal regarding the frequency of the observance and its modalities, including the possibility of the adoption of a resolution by the General Assembly, and to report to the Commission at its forty-third session on that proposal (ibid.).

II. Consultation with the Bureau of the Statistical Commission

4. The Statistics Division, as the secretariat of the Commission, carefully reviewed and analysed the records of the discussion at the forty-second session of the Commission, on the basis of which and of further informal consultations with Member States, it presented a proposal to the Bureau for review and approval. The Bureau subsequently recommended the following:

A. Five-year periodicity

5. A majority of speakers at the Commission had favoured such a five-year interval. Some of the reasons put forward in support of this periodicity were:

- Marking World Statistics Day globally every five years would enable this international day to have and to maintain a more exceptional status, more likely to give rise to high-profile events and to generate a considerable amount of publicity
- This option would also leave more room to national statistical offices to focus on their respective regional and national days and other public activities
- A five-year interval for marking World Statistics Day globally would be more realistic, taking into account the limited resources often available to national statistical offices and to the Statistics Division of the United Nations for promotional activities
- A five-year interval would fit in naturally with the rhythm of the 10-year global census rounds.

B. Modality

6. One of the key elements of the overwhelming success of the first World Statistics Day was the organizational model of "decentralization", by which countries and international agencies could develop ideas and activities suitable for their particular circumstances. The Statistics Division, under the mandate of the Statistical Commission, provided central leadership by making available promotional materials (logo, posters, press kits, etc.) and by creating a platform where country experiences were exchanged. It is proposed to maintain that basic organizational model. In line with the recommendation of the Statistical Commission, more attention should be given to maximizing coverage in the media. This will allow an even wider audience to be reached, beyond the professional community, to which to advocate the importance of official statistics.

C. General Assembly resolutions for future World Statistics Days

7. The mandate provided by the General Assembly in its resolution 64/267, in which it established World Statistics Day for 20 October 2010 was a crucial basis for bringing the issue of official statistics to the attention of policy decision makers at the highest levels. It is, therefore, suggested that the mandate of the General Assembly again be sought for future World Statistics Days. Specifically in order to leave sufficient time for preparatory activities, it is suggested to seek the mandate of the General Assembly at the latest by 2014 for World Statistics Day 2015, as well as for future World Statistics Days at the proposed five-year intervals.

III. Conclusion

8. By taking note of this report, the Commission is invited to confirm the Bureau's recommendation that World Statistics Day be observed every five years.